



BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

OF WISCONSIN INC

Zablocki VAMC, 72-D-20, Milwaukee, WI 53295 • 1-414-382-5123 • gstraynor@aol.com

March 10, 2010

Chairman Sullivan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gary Traynor, and I currently serve as the President of the Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin. I am here today to offer our strong endorsement for SB 578.

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) is an 11,000 member group with 53 chapters in the United States. Our Wisconsin (BVAWI) Regional Group is a subordinate group of the BVA and is the only chapter in this state. We have our own bylaws and share the mission statement with our National group. We are an approximately 175-member chartered nonprofit organization and were created in 1945 by blinded veterans of World War II.

Today, BVA remains an organization of "blinded Veterans helping blinded veterans." BVA is the only veteran's service organization exclusively dedicated to helping blinded and visually impaired veterans rebuild their lives and to live independently. Although BVA was chartered by the U.S. Congress, we receive no government funds.

CHARTERED BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin, Inc.



COMMUNIQUE



February

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1 888.469.6614 ext 45220
gs raynor@aol.com**

2 10

From the Top

We are veterans helping veterans by getting together, sharing information and experiences, and getting involved in this worth-while nonprofit group.

I hope this newsletter finds you all doing great. We are scheduling another Regional Group conference call meeting for Tuesday, March 9. Our guest speaker for this meeting will be Jerry Schutter, who is the Chief at Hines Blind Center. After his presentation there will be time allotted for questions.

We had a great turnout at our 2nd annual Christmas Party. The attendance was up about 25%. The Ho-Chunk staff did an outstanding job in preparing a delicious buffet meal, in addition to assisting with all of our needs. Thanks to your generosity, we had approximately \$1 000 in donations making for a very exciting raffle. The gift exchange also went very well with the wine lovers going straight for the wrapped bottles and the candy lovers going for the boxes. I would also like to thank our volunteers for stepping up to the plate and making this successful and fun-filled event possible.

Speaking of Christmas, our group has not made an annual donation to the Hines Blind Center. We will be discussing and hopefully approving the donation of a verbal microwave for the vets break room at our upcoming conference call meeting. The microwave which is presently there is not verbal and is not very user-friendly.

In this bulletin, there is an article written by Bob Malak, who is our Field Service Officer, identifying a fantastic volunteer opportunity at the Zablocki VA Medical Center. This is a chance to meet a lot of great staff

and fellow veterans along with a great feeling of accomplishment from knowing you are helping visually impaired and blinded veterans in need.

This bulletin has been distributed to all active and former Blinded Veterans Association members of our Wisconsin regional group. If you are a former member, we would love to have you back with our group. The Blinded Veterans Association plays a major roll for veterans with vision loss to have the opportunity of receiving adaptive equipment and other entitlements. Not to mention, we have a great time in getting together, sharing information, stories and experiences. Feel free to contact our Field Service Officer or any of our BVA Officers if you wish to rejoin our regional group.

BVAWI Invited to Attend 1st Annual Midwest Conference

Hiram Wurf, the founder and Executive Director of 12 State, Inc. has personally invited the Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin to attend the Midwest Conference. The conference dates are 22-24 October 2010. The conference includes a medical symposium on Diabetes (including Diabetic Retinopathy and Diabetic Macular Edema) and a symposium on Retinitis Pigmentosa. This event will take place at The Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI (main), with other locations (primarily bowling alleys and theaters) in Madison and adjoining municipalities.

Hiram is interested in our regional group holding either a quarterly meeting at Vision Midwest or else formally having a gathering of BVAWI at the conference. Listed are some of the ideas Hiram has that might be of interest and benefit to our regional group:

***Recruitment**

Hiram already plans to attract veterans from the VA Hospital and other programs in Wisconsin and distributing literature on the conference at VA Hospitals and is willing to include information on BVAWI, which could help attract non-BVA members to join our group."

***Conference Presentations**

Among numerous other presentations covering everything from leisure activities (including sensory gardening) to healthy living (including diabetes nutrition information) to medical information, "we will have

Coordinator, other VA employees, BVA Field Service Representative, and the Regional BVA President.

BVA wishes to emphasize that we would find it preferable to appoint a BVA/VAVS deputy who has adequate mobility skills and has graduated from the VA blind rehabilitation program; in as much, as to act as a role- model to the newly visually impaired or blind veteran. Also, it is helpful to learn the fundamental VA services in order to explain what may be offered to those seeking low vision/ blind assistance at the Zablocki VAMC.

To volunteer for this position, please contact National Field Service Representative Bob Malak at 414-382-5123.

Military Humor

Story 1 The Motivational Run

My marine husband and I live on a military base, so when I began jogging to lose weight, I ran the route the Marines run every day, usually encountering the same platoon. I enjoyed listening to their cadence calls. It wasn't long before I could keep up with the platoon, and eventually I passed them. I knew my running program was a success when I heard them give me this special cadence: "The big, fat lady used to dine/But now she's looking mighty fine!"

--Contributed to "Humor In Uniform" by Anne P. Stanley

Story 2 Forced on Base

On business, I was driving north to San Diego on I-15, intending to exit on Miramar Road. But somehow I found myself at Miramar Naval Air Station.

I couldn't turn around without going through the entrance gate.

Rolling down my window, I said to the guard,

"I really don't want to be here."

"Ma'am," replied the young sailor, looking me straight in the eye,

"neither do I."

--Contributed to "Humor In Uniform" by Shirley A. Cox

Please let BVAWI Secretary Dennis Marquardt or President Gary Traynor know if you have a story that you would like to share with our membership. Our contact information is in the officer section of this newsletter. There are a lot of good stories out there and our readers would love to hear yours.

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming Meeting

When: Tuesday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m.

To attend the conference call, dial: 1-800-767-1750. After the recorded message, dial the access code of 78033#

Where: A comfortable and very quiet place in your home - Conference Call meeting. Do not hesitate to call and remind our fellow members of this meeting.

Meeting Agenda

- *Roll Call
- *Opening Rituals
- *Presidents Opening Comments
- *Introduction of Our Guest Speaker
- *Secretaries Report
- *Treasurers Report
- *Unfinished Business
 - Update of Council on Veterans Programs
- *New Business
 - Microwave Donation
 - Discussion of Important Volunteer Position
 - 12-State MidWest Conference Involvement in Madison
 - When and Where to have Next Meeting
- *Committee Reports
 - Recreational
 - Membership
 - Fund Raising
- *Closing Ritual

2009-2010 Elected Officers**President**

Gary M. Traynor
2851 Neptune Ct
Eau Claire, WI 54703
Phone: (715)832-9448
Cell: (715)864-1900
email: gstraynor@aol.com

Vice President

Robert G. Zischke
N114 W16677 Royal Ct
Germantown, WI 53022
Phone: (262)251-1312

Secretary

Dennis Marquardt
801 1/2 Miller Street
Marinette, WI 54143
Phone (715)732-1250

Treasurer

James H. Abrams
N98 W15882 Shagbark Rd
Germantown, WI 53022
Phone: (262)251-8782

Judge Advocate

John Yunke
1898 hale Road
Pestigo, WI 53189-7742
Phone (715)582-4279

Sgt. at Arms

Herbert Edwardson
2220 C. Meadowbrook Court
Oshkosh, WI 54904
Phone: (920)231-8134

Any and All Donations are Gratefully Accepted

If you would like to make a donation to the Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin (501(c)19 non-profit organization), please make check or money order payable to: Blinded Veterans Assn of WI and send this much appreciated donation to our BVAWI Treasurer, Jim Abrams, N98 W15882 Shagbark Road, Germantown, WI 53022-5153. Your contributions will be utilized for the continued rebuilding and growth of our organization which we are all proud to be a part of.

Additionally, if you have inputs for future newsletters or other general comments, please feel free to contact BVAWI President Gary Traynor at (715) 832-9448, Cell: (715)864-1900 or by email: gstraynor@aol.com



BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

477 H STREET NORTHWEST • WASHINGTON D.C. 20001-2694 • (202) 371-8880

BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

FACT SHEET

Thousands Need Help

- More than 7,000 veterans become blind or visually impaired every year. Although the main causes are accidents, diseases, and health problems related to the aging process, hundreds of military service personnel have recently been blinded in during military service in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- More than 165,000 blinded veterans live in the United States. More than half of these men and women do not know they are eligible for special services and benefits.
- The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) is the only Veterans Service Organization chartered by Congress to exclusively represent the needs of America's blinded veterans.

BVA Provides Answers

- **Field Service Program**--The Field Service Program is the backbone of the Association. All BVA Field Service Representatives are blinded veterans. They travel throughout the United States finding and counseling blinded veterans and their families. BVA Field Reps act as role models. They encourage fellow blinded veterans to take charge of their lives. They link veterans with services, rehabilitation training, and other benefits. When those veterans are ready to go out on their own, BVA Field Reps can help them find jobs.
- **Kathern F. Gruber Scholarship Program**--Since the early '80s, BVA has offered spouses and dependent children of blinded veterans a chance to continue their education through the Kathern F. Gruber Scholarship Program.
- **The BVA Bulletin**--The magazine is the Association's voice. Through it blinded veterans and their families keep in touch with each other and stay informed about services, benefits and legislation. The **Bulletin** is offered free of charge to all blinded veterans.

There is no charge for any BVA service. Membership is not a prerequisite. All legally blinded veterans are eligible whether they became blind during or after active duty. You may have a relative, friend, or acquaintance in the community worthy of BVA assistance!

- For more information, call BVA National Headquarters in Washington D.C. at (800) 669-7079 or email BVA at bva@bva.org. You can also find more information on BVA's website at www.bva.org.

